

# Chicano Latino Affairs Council Capstone

## Harnessing the Power of Collective Impact to Address Kindergarten Readiness

In support of an initiative by the Chicano Latino Affairs Council of Minnesota, a group of graduate students from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs researched and analyzed the issues facing families and children as they prepare to enter Kindergarten.

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## *Executive Summary*

There is fierce competition across the country to adequately fund a concentrated effort to engage children in formal learning opportunities from birth to 5 years of age. Those most in need, children from low-income and/or minority families, suffer the greatest gap in achievement with their peers who often have greater wealth and family resources, yet they are least able to access what they need to start school ready to learn. The consequences of this disparity are particularly prevalent in Minnesota, which has been identified by the U.S. Department of Education as having one of the worst achievement gaps in the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The Chicano Latino Affairs Council of Minnesota (CLAC) has expressed an interest in forming a pilot project to address this issue, especially as it relates to the community they represent. The pilot project would occur in Rochester, Minn., and serve to connect Chicano and Latino children (and their families) to services that could improve the educational outcomes for this population. CLAC wanted to learn more about other organizations that could serve as models working to close the achievement gap among the Chicano and Latino population.

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<sup>1</sup> USA Today (November 25, 2014). *Diversity in the Classroom*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/longform/news/nation/2014/11/25/minnesota-school-race-diversity/18919391/>



In order to understand the political feasibility and capacity of this type of community action in Rochester, it was important to research the work of current stakeholder groups that align with the mission of improving the early learning preparation of children from poor and minority families. The goal of this research is to provide meaningful recommendations that will adequately align the mission-driven work of CLAC with appropriate actions in the Rochester community that can address the challenges posed by lack of knowledge, capacity and funding.

Findings from the research for this project revealed well-developed institutional and collaborative community strategies that are supporting achievement for underserved populations in the pre-kindergarten years. It also revealed an array of unlicensed care arrangements that cater to at-risk children, but that are also the most unprepared to offer high quality early learning opportunities. In light of these findings, we considered other recommendations that could build family capacity to support a child's educational needs, resulting in improved kindergarten readiness in poor and minority communities. These recommendations will create a pathway for CLAC to lead the way in engaging Latino and Chicano families in support of kindergarten readiness activities while also illuminating the way for other communities of color to take advantage of the recommendations.

## Background

### The Issue

It is a well-known fact that Minnesota has the highest and most persistent achievement gap in the nation. Despite millions of dollars being invested in addressing the issue, there have been marginal gains for students of color over the last decade. In 2013, approximately 85 percent of white students graduated on time, compared to 58 percent of Hispanic students and 56 percent of black students.<sup>2</sup> Students of color also score persistently lower in kindergarten readiness and the benchmarks set forth by the

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<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Department of Education (February 19, 2014). *Minnesota Report Card*. Retrieved from <http://rc.education.state.mn.us/>.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments throughout elementary and high school.<sup>3</sup> The state of Minnesota has pledged to the U.S. Department of Education to cut the state's achievement gap in half by 2017.<sup>4</sup>

## The Client: The Chicano Latino Affairs Council

The Chicano Latino Affairs Council (CLAC) is a state agency created by the Minnesota legislature in 1978 to advise the state government on matters of interest to the Latino community. CLAC self-identifies as “a bridge of communication and collaboration between Latinos and the government, the private sector and nonprofit.”<sup>5</sup> Their work spans a range of issues from advocacy to educating legislators, agency heads, the media and the general public about the accomplishments and contributions of Chicanos and Latinos in Minnesota.

CLAC consists of a fifteen-member Council of Directors: eleven are members of the Chicano and Latino community and four are legislators. Within the eleven community members, there is a representative from each of Minnesota's eight congressional districts and three at-large community representatives. All community members are appointed by the governor of Minnesota.<sup>6</sup> The policy issues they advocate for include health, education, economic development, housing and immigration.

CLAC has a four-member staff that provides operational support for the council. The staff is headed by Executive Director, Hector Garcia. Other staff members include Gladys Rodriguez (Office Manager), Rebeca Sedarski (Regional Community Liaison and Project Coordinator) and Elyse Ruiz (Legislative and Community Outreach Manager). For the purposes of this project, Garcia and Sedarski

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<sup>3</sup> McGuire, K., Brant, S., (February 20, 2014) Minnesota Graduation Rates Rose in 2013. *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://www.startribune.com/local/west/246251421.html>

<sup>4</sup> Minnesota Department of Education, *MDE Back-to-School Leadership Conference*, (August 6, 2014)

<sup>5</sup> Chicano Latino Affairs Council (2013). *About Us*. Retrieved from [www.clac.state.mn.us](http://www.clac.state.mn.us)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

were the primary points of contact to provide support for and clarification of the project, the research and the goals.

## Capstone Project Description

The Chicano Latino Affairs Council first approached the Humphrey School of Public Affairs for graduate student assistance in a project they were undertaking. Referred to as “Rochester’s Optimum Integration of the Latino Community,” this project relies on three modules: international business and research, Latino education and community.<sup>7</sup> CLAC requested that a group of students from the Humphrey School dedicate a capstone project to addressing the second module — Latino education.

The basis of this endeavor, also referred to as the “Rochester Project”, originated in May 2013 when CLAC saw two areas of potential in Rochester: established need and available resources. The resources identified by CLAC stemmed from a perceived willingness in the Rochester community to address this pressing issue, as well as a wide range of knowledge present from Latino individuals from all walks of life. In their 2013 draft plan, CLAC described Rochester in the following terms: “Rochester is a city of about 100,000 and has a strong presence of foreign high-level professionals, CLAC believes that the perception of potential added-value by Latinos is more evident than elsewhere in Minnesota and that the city has the *esprit de corps* necessary to make such a community effort successful in the near term.”<sup>8</sup> It is the goal of CLAC to use the Rochester Project as a pilot to create a model for Latino education in Minnesota and throughout the nation.

There are many ways in which CLAC can partner with stakeholders throughout the Rochester area to close the achievement gap among Latino students there. CLAC proposed an “early learning hub” to connect Latino families with young children (0 - 5 years old) to direct service providers. This solution

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<sup>7</sup> Chicano Latino Affairs Council (2013). *Rochester’s Optimum Integration of the Latino Community*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



is based on the observation that the Latino community is not receiving the support they need to achieve kindergarten readiness, resulting in an achievement gap that persists through graduation. We considered this solution, among others, when identifying the areas of research to encompass in this capstone project. While important to note that the early learning hub was CLAC's original solution, we will be giving it equal consideration with other proposals when discussed in our recommendations.

The purpose of this capstone is to identify and harness the resources that could improve the educational outcomes of Latino students in the Rochester community. Identification is achieved through a great deal of research done on the issue of the achievement gap, as well as on the current work of key stakeholders in the community. The second part — harnessing the resources — will be achieved through the execution of a phased collective impact plan, as outlined in the recommendations section.

Analysis of the research conducted demonstrated that a renewed focus on the under-utilized and under-funded areas currently addressing student achievement is the best place to begin tackling the issue. The research also revealed a compelling argument as to why the achievement gap among the Latino community is a problem that transcends the Chicano and Latino community. Understanding of stakeholders' perceptions, coupled with a phased plan to draw these groups to the table, CLAC will be better positioned to lead a successful coalition after integrating the products of the research into their project.

## The Delivery Systems and Quality of Early Learning

The institutions in which early learning take place in Minnesota, and across the nation, are varied. The term “early learning” is most often associated with programs such as the Early Childhood Family Education program, school district preschool programs and Head Start. However, for many children, early learning takes place outside of the institution of child care centers. There are several categories of child care settings: licensed center-based programs, licensed family-based programs, and





unlicensed home care and preschool programs.<sup>9</sup> According to data gathered by the Children’s Defense Fund on Minnesota, there are 65 licensed center-based programs in Olmsted County and 503 licensed family-based centers.<sup>10</sup> In 2012, the average annual cost of licensed family-based centers ranged from \$7,322 to \$8,017 and the cost of center-based programs ranged from \$10,657 to \$13,601.<sup>11</sup> The number of unlicensed care arrangements are difficult to measure, but have an important place in the discussion surrounding early learning opportunities.

Based on the costs outlined above, family-based (both licensed and unlicensed) home care settings are alluring for low-income families. For families whose native language is not English, these family-based centers are even better suited for them, as some conduct their care in other languages. In 2012, 13% of family-based care centers in Olmsted County were identified as “providers speaking a language other than English”.<sup>12</sup> The compilation of these factors make family-based care centers a more accessible choice among low-income, recent immigrant, and minority populations.

Recognizing the amount of at-risk children that take advantage of family-based centers, the state of Minnesota initiated a few programs aimed at improving the quality of child care offerings. These programs are Parent Aware, Child Care Resource and Referral Regions grants, facility loans and accreditation reimbursement funding. The former two programs are identified as referral programs and the latter two are funding-based. Parent Aware also incorporates a quality-rating system by which state funding for these facilities is allocated based on the ratings attributed to them. The Parent Aware rating system is based on the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. These indicators include:

- Social and Emotional Development

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<sup>9</sup> Child Care Aware of Minnesota (2014). *Types of Child Care*. Retrieved from

<http://childcareawaremn.org/families/before-you-search-for-child-care/types-of-child-care>

<sup>10</sup> Children’s Defense Fund of Minnesota (2012). *Kid’s Count Data Book*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdf-mn.org/research-library/kids-count/>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



- Approaches to learning
- Language and Literacy Development
- Creativity and the Arts
- Cognitive Development
- Physical and Motor Development<sup>13</sup>

In the 2014 legislative session, lawmakers approved an additional \$23 million to go towards early learning scholarships. At roughly \$5,000 per scholarship, these funds will help 9% of the eligible children in Minnesota attend an early learning facility.<sup>14</sup> The scholarships are provided directly to the care facility and are only awarded to children attending a center enrolled in the Parent Aware rating program. The criteria for a four-star rating are outlined in Appendix A. The Parent Aware rating system is a four-star system and one-half of the \$23 million allocated to early learning scholarships in FY15 will only go to four-star rated facilities.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, it is imperative that more home care providers, including those in unlicensed home care settings, are equipped with knowledge of the program, its rating system and the resources to achieve a four-star rating. Organizations such as the Chicano Latino Affairs Council are well-positioned to connect providers within their community to such resources.

## Current Organizations working to address the issue

According to a working group initiated by Twin Cities Strive and conducted by the University of Minnesota, there are currently 500 organizations in the Minneapolis/St. Paul region working to close the

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<sup>13</sup> Minnesota Department of Education (2014). *Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress*. Retrieved from <file:///C:/Users/ortis052/Downloads/009530-Early%20Childhood%20Indicators%20of%20Progress-Minnesota%20Early%20Learning%20Standards.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Minnesota 2013 Session Law Chapter 116 Article 8, section 2. Retrieved from [https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/?year=2013&type=0&keyword\\_type=all&keyword=early+learning+scholarships&dctype=Chapter&id=116](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/?year=2013&type=0&keyword_type=all&keyword=early+learning+scholarships&dctype=Chapter&id=116)

<sup>15</sup> Minnesota Department of Education (July 2013). *Minnesota Early Learning Scholarships Pathway II: Guidance for Four-Star Parent Aware Rated School Districts, Head Start and Child Care Programs*.

achievement gap.<sup>16</sup> Identifying existing organizations working to address the same issues that Chicano Latino Affairs Council aspires to solve was a critical step in our research process. While there are myriad challenges that face these organizations, there is still a wealth of information and resources there that should not be ignored. By studying the efforts of these organizations, CLAC can better understand the factors that contribute to their successes, as well as their shortcomings. This understanding will help formulate better solutions for the future. A few of the existing organizations are discussed below.

**Northside Achievement Zone:** The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) is a 501(c)3 federal Promise Neighborhood, a funding program that was established in 2010 through the U.S. Department of Education to “significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in our most distressed communities.”<sup>17</sup> NAZ began in 2003, formerly called the Peace Foundation with the mission of reducing violence in North Minneapolis.<sup>18</sup> They were awarded a five-year Promise Neighborhood grant in 2012. NAZ identifies itself as “both an organization and a collaborative of more than 30 service providers and schools, supported through a public-private partnership.”<sup>19</sup> NAZ provides support on a variety of issues, ranging from behavioral health and wellness issues to housing stabilization and career training. For the purposes of our research, we focused primarily on NAZ’s achievements in the area of early childhood education.

NAZ administers more than 100 state-funded scholarships annually through a program called Race to the Top. These scholarships allow children living in their zone to attend three and four-star Parent Aware-rated early childhood centers. Through their efforts, NAZ has helped approximately one

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<sup>16</sup> Susan Stehling, S.,(September 25, 2012). *Striving to Reduce the Achievement Gap*. Retrieved from <http://blog.mcf.org/2012/09/25/striving-to-reduce-the-achievement-gap/>

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Programs: Promise Neighborhoods*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> Northside Achievement Zone (2014). *Who We Are: History*. Retrieved from <http://northsideachievement.org>

<sup>19</sup> Northside Achievement Zone (2014). *Who We Are*. Retrieved from <http://northsideachievement.org>



quarter of the students living in north Minneapolis to achieve kindergarten readiness.<sup>20</sup> Another program that the Northside Achievement Zone created is called “NAZ Connect”, an online achievement planning and data collection system. Through this system, families are partnered with a “coach” to create an achievement plan based on the individual needs of that family. Their progress is monitored and their goals are supported through a network of schools and organizations aimed at providing them with the resources they need. NAZ has made great strides in connecting families to resources through this virtual platform.

**Generation Next:** Generation Next is a coalition of civic, business and education leaders that aims to close the achievement and opportunity gaps for students of color in the Twin Cities area. Launched in late 2012, Generation Next is headed by former Minneapolis Mayor RT Rybak and is based on the national StriveTogether model.<sup>21</sup> It is not a program in and of itself, but rather a coalition of leaders and stakeholders throughout the region. Generation Next’s stakeholder leaders group includes businesses ranging from 3M, General Mills, the University of Minnesota, public school districts and many more.<sup>22</sup> They describe their initiative as a “partnership [that] provides an overarching framework to unify and galvanize key members of existing initiatives and organizations”.<sup>23</sup>

The greatest strength of Generation Next has been their ability to bring so many powerful stakeholders to the table to address this important issue. They have outlined five distinct goals that rely heavily on data collection and assessment. While this is not the focus of every program, it has contributed to the success of this initiative. Of the 500 organizations in the Twin Cities area that are working to close the achievement gap, Generation Next has been the most successful in compiling an impressive list of stakeholders. Their ambitious proposals and the achievements of other cities that have

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<sup>20</sup> Northside Achievement Zone (2014). *Solutions*. Retrieved from <http://northsideachievement.org>

<sup>21</sup> Generation Next (2014). *About Us*. Retrieved from <http://www.gennextmsp.org/about/>

<sup>22</sup> Generation Next (2014). *About Us (Leadership Council)*. Retrieved from <http://www.gennextmsp.org/about/>

<sup>23</sup> Generation Next (2014). *About Us*. Retrieved from <http://www.gennextmsp.org/about/>



implemented the StriveTogether model (Cincinnati, Seattle, Boston) have generated enough support to form a coalition that far exceeds those of the other organizations working on this issue.<sup>24</sup>

**Public Schools:** Non-profits aren't the only organizations stepping up to the challenge of closing the achievement gap. In September 2014, the Minneapolis Public School district unveiled Acceleration 2020, a strategic plan that sets ambitious goals for the state's third largest school district. The success of the plan is measured on a "5-8-10" scorecard. This sets the district's goals as a "**5 percent** annual increase in students overall meeting or exceeding state standards in reading and math; an **8 percent** annual increase in students meeting or exceeding standards in reading and math for MPS' lowest-performing students, and a **10 percent** annual increase in the four-year graduation rate."<sup>25</sup>

The school board is also moving forward with a budgeting allocation called "weighted student funding". This budget plan allocates more funds towards schools with a higher percentage of low-income, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or special needs students.<sup>26</sup> The funding is also weighted according to the school district's priorities for that year.<sup>27</sup> For example, a school with lower score in math and science may be allocated more funds if that is a priority for the district at the time. The Minneapolis school board believes this plan would better match state funding with the students that have the highest needs.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> McGuire, K. *Generation Next Pushes Ambitious Plan to Reduce Achievement Gap*. Minneapolis Star-Tribune. Retrieved from <http://www.startribune.com/local/271720461.html>

<sup>25</sup> Minneapolis Public School District (September 2014). *Strategic Plan: Acceleration 2020*. Retrieved from [http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/strategic\\_plan](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/strategic_plan)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Minneapolis Public School District. Frequently Asked Questions: Weighted School Funding. [http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/wsf\\_questions.pdf](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/wsf_questions.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Minneapolis Public School District (September 2014). *Strategic Plan: Acceleration 2020*. Retrieved from [http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/strategic\\_plan](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/strategic_plan)

**ACHLA:** The Association of Chicanos, Hispanics and Latin Americans (ACHLA) is a non-profit organization based in Rochester, Minn., aimed at responding to the needs of Chicanos, Hispanics and Latin Americans in the area. Much of their activities focus on the integration of the Latino community into the greater Rochester area, as well as community empowerment through English-as-a-Second-Language tutoring, outreach events and recreational activities. They also offer educational programming for children and adults through a club called “Juntos”. Children can receive individual math tutoring from volunteers, as well as take part in other activities involving arts and crafts or cultural and recreational events.<sup>29</sup> CLAC plans to enlist the assistance of ACHLA in reaching the Latino community in Rochester.

## *Research Design and Methodology*

Insight into the problems facing Latino students in Rochester required thorough background research. The Chicano Latino Affairs Council was able to provide us with information on their history with the achievement gap in Rochester and other programs and organizations that have had some successes in closing the gap. CLAC has been considering a cradle-to-career model for looking at the disparities; however, this project primarily focuses on how early learning affects the achievement gap.

Aside from what was provided, we collected further data on the demographics in Rochester. Basic demographic information was available by the United States Census Bureau. Information on childcare settings was available through Child Care Aware and the Children’s Defense Fund of Minnesota. A cursory review was completed of Parent Aware-rated early education programs available in Rochester to compare the need. We also reviewed what was available when searching for programs and resources available within the Latino Community for education.

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<sup>29</sup> Association of Chicano Hispanic and Latin Americans (2014). *What is ACHLA?* Retrieved from <http://www.achla.info/>.



The next phase was interviewing stakeholders. The purpose of this phase was still information gathering. We reached out to the Minnesota Department of Education, the Rochester Diversity Council, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Child Care Resource and Referral, Rochester Public Schools and the Rochester Association of Chicanos Hispanics and Latin Americans (ACHLA). The purpose of these interviews was to understand the perception of the problem from the perspective of the groups working in the community. We wanted to learn more about the resources available for pre-kindergarten learners and to what extent they were being utilized. We wanted to learn from the direct service providers what they thought the barriers were to children coming into kindergarten prepared. Depending on the nature of the organization that was interviewed, sometimes the information was specific to the Latino population, and other times it was addressed more broadly to include all children.

The last phase was going through all the information and putting together the themes that kept emerging in the research and the interviews. We wanted to make sure that the delivered product was based on both statistics and the community story. Recommendations to the Chicano Latino Affairs Council are presented in the form of a collective impact plan.

## *Environmental Scan and Analysis*

### *Stakeholder Analysis*

One of the main reasons Rochester was chosen by CLAC to focus on improving kindergarten readiness was because many of the major players in the schools, businesses, and organizations are willing to participate in addressing the issue. The demographics by ethnicity in the Rochester Public Schools are also comparable to statewide school enrollment.<sup>30</sup> According to the 2014 data provided by the Department of Education, Rochester has 8.8% Hispanic, non-white enrollment compared to the

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<sup>30</sup> Minnesota Department of Education, *Minnesota Report Card* (2014), Retrieved from [http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#mySchool/orgId--999999000000\\_\\_p--1/orgId--10535000000\\_\\_p--1](http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#mySchool/orgId--999999000000__p--1/orgId--10535000000__p--1)



state's 8.1%<sup>31</sup>. As mentioned earlier, there are also many other initiatives taking place in the community to address kindergarten readiness. For all these reasons, Rochester was identified as a favorable location for CLAC to pilot a project. In order to address the issue, we wanted to understand the key players from a power and interests perspective (See Appendix E). We took a look at the stakeholders from a state/national, institutional/business and community level (See Appendix D).

### *State and National Level*

On a state level there are key players that not only are very interested in the issue, but are powerful to have at the table when addressing kindergarten readiness. Organizations in this section are either state level agencies or are national organizations that may operate on a community level. Head Start and United Way are two major organizations that are interested in kindergarten readiness. Because these organizations have a vested interest, they should be key players in the development of any collective impact planning. The Minnesota Department of Education is also a key player on the state level.

United Way is a worldwide organization that has 1,800 community based locations in 41 countries.<sup>32</sup> The organization connects people and resources in communities to improve lives. One of their four focuses is education. This is an organization that is well established, well connected and has money – all of which amounts to influence. The United Way in Olmsted County has already partnered with Byron Community Education, Child Care Resource and Referral, Civic League Day Nursery, Good News Children's Center, and Tri Valley Opportunity Council to address age zero to six school preparedness<sup>33</sup>. This is a key stakeholder to get on board since both CLAC and United Way have goals of connecting the community to resources. Although, based on a review of United Way collaborations,

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<sup>31</sup> Minnesota Department of Education, *Minnesota Report Card* (2014), Retrieved from [http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#mySchool/orgId--999999000000\\_\\_p--1/orgId--10535000000\\_\\_p--1](http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#mySchool/orgId--999999000000__p--1/orgId--10535000000__p--1)

<sup>32</sup> United Way, About (2014), Retrieved from <http://www.unitedway.org/pages/about-united-way-worldwide/>

<sup>33</sup> United Way, Education: Community Programs (2014), Retrieved from <http://www.uwolmsted.org/education-community-programs>





they may be less likely to get involved in an initiative that is limited to one ethnic community. United Way connects all people, so their initiatives spanning their four focus areas are intentionally broad to capture as many people as possible.

Head Start is also a big player in Rochester. Head Start is a federal program that helps low-income families break the cycle of poverty by promoting economic self-sufficiency and to prepare low-income children to enter kindergarten confidently, with the social, physical, emotional, and cognitive skills and competencies necessary for success in school<sup>34</sup>. Minnesota Head Start programs received state and federal funding to serve 14,887 children in fiscal year 2012/2013, 29 percent of whom are identified as Hispanic and 19 percent of whom speak Spanish as their primary language.<sup>35</sup>

Like the United Way, Head Start serves Olmsted County. They are administered through Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR). Head Start's curriculum — "Individual Goals and Objective Checklist" — enables Early Head Start teachers to continuously assess children in their primary stages of development. Three checklists correspond to the three primary stages of a young child's development before the age of three: young infant, mobile infant, and toddler. Within each checklist, the goals for the child remain the same<sup>36</sup>. Since Head Start is already working on the problem, it is important to have them as a contributing member in the conversation about kindergarten readiness. This is another organization that is a household name for families with young children. They are a powerful and influential player. Like the United Way, we would want to address kindergarten readiness more broadly

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<sup>34</sup> Minnesota Head Start Association, Inc., *About MN Head Start Assoc Inc.*, (2013), Retrieved from <http://www.mnheadstart.org/about.html>

<sup>35</sup> Minnesota Head Start Association, Inc., *MN Head Start Assoc Facts Stats*, (2013), Retrieved from <http://www.mnheadstart.org/facts.html>. (Note, these percentages were calculated using the "total funded enrollment" of 14,887, not the "total actual enrollment" compared to the demographics of ethnicity and language.)

<sup>36</sup> Minnesota Head Start Association, Inc., *Early Head Start*, (2013), Retrieved from <http://www.mnheadstart.org/programs.html>

in order to interest them in a partnership. Head Start serves a broad spectrum of ethnicities with low-income needs.

The Minnesota Department of Education is another key stakeholder at the state-level. They focus on collecting data on kindergarten readiness, but currently only captures 10 percent of the children entering kindergarten. They are working on higher quality education outcomes.<sup>37</sup> We spoke with Melvin Carter III, Director of the Office of Early Learning at the Minnesota Department of Education about the issue of kindergarten readiness and where he saw room for improvement.

In the past, Carter has worked on several initiative aimed at improving outcomes for early learners. He has tailored the mottos of his past initiatives to a theme he described as “working together to ensure all children live up to their full potential”.<sup>38</sup> In the past, he has found that new initiatives are viewed skeptically by existing organizations working to address this issue, what he refers to as a “flavor of the month” label. He felt very strongly that working with the current resources and focusing on those children that do not enroll in child care centers or family based childcare should be a big focus. Parent Aware-rated facilities are receiving the proper training and resources, but children in other child care setting are not receiving the same access to these tools. These children are vulnerable because they are outside the watchful eyes of the “system.” The Minnesota Department of Education is another important and powerful stakeholder to have involved in the conversation.

### *Institution and Business level*

The next level of analysis was the institutional and business level in Rochester. This level is where the local businesses, public schools and hospitals and clinics fall into the mix. On this level, there

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<sup>37</sup> Minnesota Department of Education, Welcome, (2014), Retrieved from <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Welcome/051963>

<sup>38</sup> Melvin Carter III, personal communication, date (see Appendix F)



is a little less interest because they are focusing on their main line of business, but still hold quite a bit of power.

Mayo Clinic is the most well-known health care enterprise in our state and has national and international recognition and power in the healthcare industry. They have demonstrated an interest in kindergarten readiness through their supportive funding of “The Place,” a new facility that holds ten Head Start classrooms and is a collaboration between Child Care Resource and Referral and the Boys & Girls Club of Rochester.<sup>39</sup> Mayo’s contribution was about eight percent of the \$8M project.

Mayo is an incredibly powerful stakeholder in the community and a credible brand. It is also overlooked that hospitals are often the first and only institutional connection with new moms when their child is born. If there was an opportunity to educate a new mom on a program or resource, the hospital where their child is born is a perfect opportunity. Since Mayo does focus on healthcare, it would be best to take an “all-child” approach for them as well to maximize impact. If we were asking them to provide information, it would be more palatable to ask them to do it across the board than to single out a certain ethnic population. Mayo Clinic would be a critical partner to have involved in the conversation.

Public schools are greatly interested in kindergarten readiness, as it affects students for their entire tenure in the school system. Public schools have relatively high interest and a moderate amount of power. The Rochester Public Schools oversee a program called School Readiness which is delivered through the structure of Child Care Resource and Referral. They serve an average of 183 children per year who are deemed at risk of not being school ready. The following table shows rolling enrollment over the last five years broken down by ethnicity.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The Place, *About*, Retrieved from <http://www.theplacerochester.org/about-us.php>

<sup>40</sup> Peggy O’Toole-Martin, personal communication, November 24, 2014

**Table 1**

<b>Rochester Public Schools / School Readiness Enrollment (2009 to 2014)</b>								
	<b>White</b>	<b>Black/ African/ American</b>	<b>Hispanic/ Latino</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander</b>	<b>American Indian/ Alaskan Native</b>	<b>Other/ single race</b>	<b>Other/ two or more races</b>
<b>2009-10</b>	57.46%	8.21%	7.46%	10.45%	0.00%	0.00%	0.75%	15.67%
<b>2010-11</b>	49.22%	17.97%	10.94%	7.81%	0.00%	0.00%	0.78%	13.28%
<b>2011-12</b>	47.76%	9.70%	5.97%	14.18%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	19.40%
<b>2012-13</b>	43.83%	16.67%	7.41%	13.58%	0.62%	1.23%	0.00%	16.67%
<b>2013-14</b>	42.50%	23.13%	11.25%	11.88%	0.00%	0.00%	0.63%	10.63%

These School Readiness children are served in addition to the Head Start and Early Head Start programs offered through Child Care Resource and Referral. Children are referred to School Readiness by a variety of entities, but the services include health and wellness screening referrals, family engagement activities and participation in an early learning assessment to better target additional service referrals.<sup>41</sup>

Michael Muñoz, the Superintendent of Rochester Public Schools (RPS), was interviewed as part of the research for this project. He was interested in a collaborative that connects families with resources. Muñoz felt strongly about testing for kindergarten readiness since the current system has been inconsistent and unsteady. The public schools would be able to add value in the evaluation section and of course give feedback on what is going on in the schools. RPS also runs community education programming called Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE), what they brand as Parents are Important in Rochester (PAIIR).<sup>42</sup> This subset stakeholder group of the public schools connects more with parents who may not have their children in formal early learning programs. Their focus is to invite parents of young children (birth to age 5) to come together and learn from each other about

<sup>41</sup> Rochester Public School's Community Education programming, *School Readiness*, (2014), Retrieved from <http://www.rochesterce.org/cms/One.aspx?objectid=5281314>

<sup>42</sup> Rochester Public Schools Community Education, ECFE/PAIIR, (2014), Retrieved from <http://www.rochesterce.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=3087818&pageId=5281314>



developmental stages and milestones and create community among the parents who can then support each other. It is a powerful early learning environment, building capacity in families to better understand where their children need to be and how to respond appropriately to normal childhood behavior. However much of the programming is fee-based and generally attracts people from middle and upper income families looking to connect with other parents.<sup>43</sup> The types of educational events and activities that ECFE delivers through PAIIR could be a model molded to the needs of families at other economic strata. This kind of ECFE activity positions the school district to be an active partner in tackling the kindergarten readiness deficits in the family setting.

The Rochester business community is a stakeholder that has not extensively been considered to be a part of the conversation. The local businesses are interested in students doing well, as an educated population results in skilled workers and a stronger economy. Kindergarten readiness might not be high on their agenda, but they would be interested in positive outcomes. Anything that draws people into the city is of interest to a business. There is also an opportunity for sponsorship that would look great to a local business. This could be a powerful stakeholder group if kindergarten readiness is framed appropriately to pique the interest of local business.

### *Community Level*

On the community level there are many stakeholders interested in kindergarten readiness. Although individually they do not necessarily have a lot of power, their interest is high. In most cases these organizations are already working on the problem and are key players in putting together an initiative to address the problem in Rochester. This group consists of childcare providers, ACHLA, Child Care Resource and Referral, parents and community members to name a few.

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<sup>43</sup> Peggy O'Toole-Martin, personal communication, November 14, 2014



Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) is a nonprofit organization, 88 percent of whose funding is comprised of federal, state and local government grants and contracts. They also receive a small portion of funding from Olmsted County United Way. Their mission is to ensure positive beginnings for all young children and their families. CCRR is a resource for parents, childcare providers and community members for all aspects of early childhood. They are also the resource that connects families to Head Start in Olmsted County. CCRR leads a 0 to 6 Early Learning Group in Olmsted County composed of the RPS School Readiness staff, Byron School Readiness, Civic League Day Center, Good News Children Center, CCRR Head Start and the Tri-Valley Migrant Head Start<sup>44</sup>. Since this is an organization that is already working on kindergarten readiness, it would be a key stakeholder to be involved. Sandy Simar, Director of Education at CCRR, believes the problem is that there are not enough Parent Aware-rated childcare programs available. They are highly interested in kindergarten readiness and can be a powerful asset in the community.

The Association of Chicanos, Hispanics and Latin Americans (ACHLA) is working in the community on multiple levels to help the Chicano, Latino, and Hispanic populations. Kindergarten readiness is not something they are specifically working on, but is something that greatly impacts their community. They are a powerful organization within the Latino community that can speak to some of the cultural and language barriers to achievement. They are highly interested in kindergarten readiness but have limited resources as to how to address the problem. ACHLA is an important stakeholder to have involved in the conversation because they could speak to the community needs and barriers and get information to people in need. They may not have much decision-making or persuasive power as Head Start, Mayo or United Way, but are critical to reaching the Chicano and Latino community.

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<sup>44</sup> Child Care Resource and Referral, *About Us*, (2014), Retrieved from [http://www.c2r2.org/about\\_us/general\\_info\\_history](http://www.c2r2.org/about_us/general_info_history)



Parents and community members would be the most affected stakeholders but surprisingly not highly interested until their child is not identified as “ready” for kindergarten. Miriam Goodson, founding member of ACHLA, said the problem in the Chicano and Latino community is that they don’t know what “ready” means until it is too late. This population isn’t broadly aware how many children in low or non-Parent Aware ranked childcare programs are unprepared for kindergarten<sup>45</sup>. It would be important to consider this population in the conversation, not because they have power or interest, but because they are one of the targets in addressing the problem. Their perspective and how they get information would be valuable.

## Key Themes

The original stated capstone request of the Chicano Latino Affairs Council (CLAC) was to investigate how to create a cradle-to-career collaborative that would support Chicano and Latino children and improve their achievement. After more discussion and meetings, CLAC narrowed its focus to the early learning phase and wanted to explore how to better connect Chicano and Latino children and families to existing resources such as early learning scholarships, highly rated early learning programming and other services that would assist the children in becoming kindergarten ready and lowering the early achievement gap. CLAC expressed a desire to achieve this early learning hub through a collective impact approach.

In order to provide recommendations to CLAC on how to accomplish their goal, it was necessary to understand what programming and capacity currently exists within the Rochester community, identify who is already collaborating on this front, and determine how CLAC could add value to existing activities within the community. We began our scan by conducting interviews with state and local

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<sup>45</sup> Miriam Goodson, personal communication, October 30, 2014

community leaders involved in providing an array of early learning strategies, programming and resources. Included in this list of interviews were:

- Melvin Carter III, Director of Early Learning (OEL) at the Minnesota Department of Education
- Jayne Gibson, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Rochester Public Schools (RPS)
- Miriam Goodson, Board Member, Secretary and Founding member of the Rochester Association of Chicanos, Hispanics and Latin Americans (ACHLA)
- Kay Hocker, Executive Director of the Rochester Diversity Council
- Michael Muñoz, Superintendent of RPS
- Peggy O'Toole-Martin, Manager for Early Childhood Family Services, a division of the Community Education Department of RPS
- Sandy Simar, Head Start Director at Child Care Resource and Referral, serving Southeast Minnesota

During these interviews (see Appendix F) we heard a number of consistent themes that centered around 1) limited capacity; 2) inconsistent assessment of readiness; 3) complex array of service providers; 4) competition for resources; and 5) difficulty in identifying families and children in need.

### *Limited Capacity to provide high quality early learning programs*

As far as direct service providers, there is a limited capacity to pair children in need with highly rated early learning programs. Sandy Simar, Education Director with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) in Southeastern Minnesota, shared statistics on the number of providers who are highly rated, meaning they are eligible to take children who qualify for early learning scholarships.<sup>46</sup>

**Table 2**

<b>Licensed Providers in Rochester</b>	<b>Total #</b>	<b>#Rated</b>	<b>#Unrated</b>
Preschool	10	3	7
Child Care Center	27	15	12
Family Child Care	318	22	296

<sup>46</sup> Sandy Simar, personal communication, November 11, 2014



This table demonstrates 30 percent of preschools, 56 percent of child care centers and a mere seven percent of licensed, family childcare providers who care for the vast majority of children within the community, demonstrate the ability to support early learning objectives.

Head Start, Early Head Start and the Rochester Public Schools (RPS) School Readiness program are outside of the previous child care and preschool program numbers. Head Start has a current waitlist of 240 children, Early Head Start has a waitlist of 63 children and the RPS School Readiness program has 39 children on their waitlist.<sup>47</sup> At any given time, the Head Start programs have around 25 to 30 percent of students who are Latino or Hispanic.<sup>48</sup> This high representation in the demographics of the program indicate a larger percentage of that population fall within the poverty guidelines, as specified by the means testing required to access Head Start.

Superintendent Michael Muñoz with the Rochester Public Schools has worked with area organizations to apply for a federal grant that would create more facilities space to provide early learning programming – space that could potentially serve 300 more children.<sup>49</sup> Though this might address the current waitlist challenge for Head Start eligible children, it does not address the question of other children who access child care in non-rated, non-institutional child care environments and who may not be getting the early learning they need to be kindergarten ready.

Just in the last six months, CCRR has received almost 500 requests for referrals for children birth to age eight in Rochester alone.<sup>50</sup> Table 3 below shows a concentration of referrals fall mainly into the infant age range (33 percent), and then again in the ages between three and four (23 percent).<sup>51</sup> This pre-kindergarten age group is eligible by age for early learning scholarships if they are also means tested to

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<sup>47</sup> Sandy Simar, personal communication, November 11, 2014

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Muñoz, personal communication, October 26, 2014

<sup>50</sup> Simar, November 11, 2014

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

qualify. The data indicates that the referral requests are concentrated in the age range where highly ranked programs that connect people with scholarships would apply. If a center or provider is not ranked high enough, the scholarships can't be applied to pay for the care.

**Table 3**

Value	Total	No Age	Under One	One	Two	Three to Four	Five	Six to Eight	Nine and Over
<b>Full-Time</b>	326	3	114	54	36	80	11	19	9
<b>% of Total Requests</b>	66.94	60	71.25	66.67	67.92	70.8	52.38	47.5	64.29
<b>Part-Time</b>	34	1	6	4	5	5	2	8	3
<b>% of Total Requests</b>	6.98	20	3.75	4.94	9.43	4.42	9.52	20	21.43
<b>Both (full time and part time)</b>	127	1	40	23	12	28	8	13	2
<b>% of Total Requests</b>	26.08	20	25	28.4	22.64	24.78	38.1	32.5	14.29
<b>Total Requests</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>14</b>

The RPS School Readiness program mentioned previously helps identify children who are not kindergarten ready so they can receive additional wrap-around services that can remediate their circumstances and try to get them on the path to accelerated achievement. (See previous enrollment figures on page 19, Table 1). CCRR also provides trainings to childcare providers and encourages them to go through Parent Aware certification.

RPS Community Education, as previously mentioned in the stakeholder analysis, has programming for early learning as well, through Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE). This early learning programming is accessible to any interested parent with young children — there is no means testing as there is for Head Start, according to ECFE literature. However, some of the programming



requires registration fees. Though there is a sliding scale for registration, the cost may still seem out of reach or inaccessible to lower income families.<sup>52</sup>

One of the programs that addresses lower income families in need who tend to fall into the minority and immigrant demographics is the Rochester Family Literacy Program at Hawthorne.<sup>53</sup> This program offers parents GED and English literacy while offering their children under five early learning programming.<sup>54</sup>

### *Inconsistent approaches to kindergarten readiness assessment*

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has been conducting research on the best assessment measures for kindergarten readiness, but has not rolled out a final version for school districts or community providers to conform to.<sup>55</sup> The Rochester Public Schools tried a new assessment tool in the 2013/2014 school year that included assessing ten key markers including recognition of upper and lower case letters, recognition of the sounds that letters make, knowing colors and shapes, recognizing numbers, doing rote counts and one to one correspondence.<sup>56</sup>

With no consistent track record for assessing kindergarten readiness, it has been difficult to measure and diagnose the readiness factors to focus on. The MDE created a program called “Pre-kindergarten to Third Grade Alignment” and invited RPS to apply to the program. They were accepted and a collaborative group of organizations have been trained on how to align the early learning programming with kindergarten readiness standards. But the work on this is yet to begin. O’Toole-

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<sup>52</sup> Rochester Public Schools Community Education, *ECFE/PAIIR Class & Registration FAQ*, (2014) Retrieved from <http://www.rochesterce.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=3087818&pageId=5282270>

<sup>53</sup> Rochester Public Schools Community Education, *Rochester Family Literacy*, (2014), Retrieved from <http://www.rochesterce.org/cms/one.aspx?objectId=4230250>

<sup>54</sup> Peggy O’Toole-Martin, personal communication, November 14, 2014

<sup>55</sup> Minnesota Department of Education, *Early Learning Resources*, (2014), Retrieved from <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/>

<sup>56</sup> Jayne Gibson, personal communication, October 26, 2014



Martin said that they just completed their last training and are now tasked with going into the Rochester community and putting an alignment plan into place.

One of the projects that may affect this question of assessment standards is the deployment of upgraded online assessment tools into more early learning environments. CCRR was successful in securing a \$250,000 grant to upgrade their existing assessment software and staff two data coaches that will help train more early learning providers to use the tool to track early learning assessments of children in their care.<sup>57</sup>

Outside of the kindergarten readiness assessment work, there are early learning assessments that RPS encourages all children to get, suggesting that year three is the optimal time to assess. This helps the district predict who might need special education programming when they reach school age. In the 2013/2014 school year, about 51 percent of the district's three-year old census identified as falling within district boundaries, took the early learning assessments.<sup>58</sup> About 7.4 percent of the three year olds assessed were Hispanic.<sup>59</sup> Overall, the district assessed 1,609 children between three and six years old, with an additional 262 assessed by Head Start or Olmsted County Public Health.<sup>60</sup>

### *Complex array of organizations working in the early learning space in Rochester*

Mapping out the organizations that deliver early learning programming or that support early learning initiatives is not easy. The number of initiatives underway in a collaborative manner are numerous.<sup>61</sup> "It's hard to say who is responsible because we all work in partnership, all the time ... there are lots of group efforts on a lot of things, lots of irons in the fire," said O'Toole-Martin.

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<sup>57</sup> Sandy Simar, personal communication, November 13, 2014

<sup>58</sup> Michael Muñoz, personal communication, October 26, 2014

<sup>59</sup> Jayne Gibson, personal communication, October 26, 2014

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Simar, November 13, 2014



In addition to institutions such as public schools, or nonprofits such as Child Care Resource and Referral, there are a number of supportive groups similar to the Rochester Diversity Council who help teachers and caregivers to understand their cultural competency or like the United Way that invests in early childhood development activities. MDE has had a significant presence with their support to align pre-kindergarten standards with elementary educational curriculum.

However, O'Toole-Martin suggests that one of the biggest gaps is the group of parents who don't access institutional, licensed childcare, what she calls the "friends, family and neighbors" audience.<sup>62</sup> Child Care Aware refers to this as "unlicensed home care". Melvin Carter III spoke of the same issue when he said that "early learning isn't always located in traditional delivery systems such as public/private schools or Head Start."<sup>63</sup> O'Toole-Martin feels that there is a lot of opportunity to work more in this space to support kindergarten readiness in the community. And, according to Miriam Goodson, ACHLA board member, the Hispanic and Latino community is much more likely to use non-institutional care arrangements than other demographics.<sup>64</sup> "[Latino] parents do not know their child is behind until it is too late," says Goodson. And by that time, they get tracked into special education, which lead them into a lower achievement path. Focusing education on parents in this community who don't use recognized, institutional childcare would be a great opportunity to address school readiness for Chicano and Latino children.<sup>65</sup>

#### *Local competition for funding resources*

Olmsted County United Way, the Minnesota Department of Education, Mayo Clinic and other funders, including federal grants through Race to the Top initiatives have already significantly invested in existing programs and early learning activity within Rochester. As mentioned previously, Mayo

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<sup>62</sup> Peggy O'Toole-Martin, personal communication, November 14, 2014

<sup>63</sup> Appendix F

<sup>64</sup> Miriam Goodson, personal communication, October 30, 2014

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



Clinic provided a significant grant to Child Care Resource and Referral to fund a wing of their new facility, “The Place,” which has ten classrooms used by Head Start, Early Head Start and the Tri-Valley Migrant Head Start programs. There are even partnerships in place at *The Place* where food preparation includes locally sourced vegetables and fruits, intended to improve the health circumstances of children in these programs.<sup>66</sup>

MDE’s Carter recommends avoiding any activities to fund something new in the Rochester community, but rather to try to organize around existing initiatives.<sup>67</sup> This would minimize the sense of competition and the possible harmful effect of diffusing funding across too many initiatives that may not be aligned with local community goals.

#### *Family, Friends & Neighbor Networks*

This last theme, referenced in the “complex array of organizations” (see Appendix D) is, according to CCRR’s O’Toole-Martin and ACHLA’s Goodson, the biggest area of opportunity to influence achievement and kindergarten readiness, especially in the Chicano and Latino community.<sup>68</sup> There is no clear way to determine how many children are floating around in the non-institutional early childhood caregiving situations (those children not on waiting lists or those in non-licensed child care provider environments).

Many parents in the Chicano and Latino community work varied hours that may not align well with traditional care settings.<sup>69</sup> The cost of childcare can be prohibitive as well - the average annual childcare expense in Minnesota for one child is around \$8,000. With poverty rates of children in the RPS hovering around 34 percent, this is prohibitive. But, even if there were more early learning

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<sup>66</sup> The Place, *Home* (2014), Retrieved from <http://www.theplacerochester.org/>

<sup>67</sup> Melvin Carter III, personal communication, November 6, 2014

<sup>68</sup> Peggy O’Toole-Martin, personal communication, November 14, 2014

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



scholarships to reach children and families, the access issues still keep many from participating in quality programming.

According to Rochester Public School data for the 2012/2013 school year, Hispanic children, and those children means tested into Free or Reduced Price Lunch or who were identified in special education tracks, were below state proficiency rates overall.

## Recommendations

CLAC can be positioned to be a leader of this initiative; however, it is important to include all communities to maximize the potential available in Rochester. It is important to note that while the phases outlined below do not specifically reference the original initiative proposed by CLAC — an early learning hub — one could be used to facilitate the suggestions outlined below. The proposal of an early learning hub — that is, a physical location where Latino families can be connected to direct service providers and additional support — was a guiding principle of our research. However, after a thorough scan of the environment, we concluded that such a physical location would not have the desired impact. Rather than being seen as adding value to the resources addressing the problem, it has been perceived as competing with those same resources already performing some of the necessary work.

It is clear that an organized, unified effort is needed to ensure the Latino community is connected to the capacity and knowledge that is needed to bring children up to kindergarten readiness standards. The phased recommendations outlined below are intended provide a pathway to this unified effort.

### Phase I

1. Create a unified message to present to stakeholders : “Educate, Create, Facilitate”
  - a. Ensure message is broad enough to encompass all struggling learners
  - b. Maximize potential by inviting all communities to take part
2. Pull the willing members of a potential coalition together first
  - a. Develop a uniform approach to tap into existing resources (see appendix B)



- b. Refine a collective impact plan (see appendix A)
  - i. Develop schedule for young parents in the Rochester area to have regular contact with developmental professionals
  - ii. Plan may be one part existing resources and one part new activities/organizational activity
- 3. Expand coalition
  - a. Invite other affairs councils to the table
  - b. Share collective impact plan
  - c. Using input from the entire coalition, develop goals based on the collective impact plan
    - i. Assign deliverables to coalition members
    - ii. Develop a timeline for action
- 4. Evaluate outcomes and make modifications as necessary
  - a. Evaluate the message - how has it been perceived by the community and stakeholders?
  - b. Evaluate the effectiveness of the coalition - are members being used to their greatest capacity?

## Phase II

- 5. Formalize a networking structure
  - a. Create subcommittees that will work on pieces of project (steering committee, communications group, finance/grant writing committee)
  - b. Create subcommittee goals/objectives
- 6. Engage funding sources/stakeholder groups that could support focused attention once formal collaborative is created.
- 7. Create ongoing metrics to gauge coalition's progress and effectiveness of the goals set forth throughout the lifecycle of the project

## Recommendations Expansion

This first recommendation acknowledges the lack of capacity to place all needy children into institutional, educational opportunities. Many of the services that are designed to create parent and family capacity outside of formal educational settings often occur at locations or times or in languages





and cultural forums that are not as meaningful or accessible to families most in need of support. The messages must be relevant and actionable to parents in needy communities.

Bringing the current primary stakeholders such as the Rochester Public Schools and Child Care Resource and Referral together, along with strong community representation perhaps initially through ACHLA, to identify the best and most accessible community events or forums is a fundamental activity upon which other collective impact action would be supported. Creating the message must happen in conjunction with the communities being served though. Even in communities of privilege, where abundant financial support is available, many families choose to educate their children at home rather than in a institutional, paid early learning environments. There must be acknowledgement that this should also be an option for poor and minority families, with the intention of helping them build their capacity to educate and prepare their children in their home, family or neighborhood setting.

The second recommendation addresses the initial group of stakeholders and how they must address existing resources to make them more meaningful to young parents in need who may not have the literacy or the time to engage with them. This initial group must also include representatives who understand the informal care network of families, friends or neighbors who support the care of young children in poor and minority communities. ACHLA will be instrumental in helping identify who might be strong representatives of this informal, but community embedded group. This engagement work will help develop a common, overarching goal that addresses early learning and kindergarten readiness with families and communities that won't or can't access formal learning opportunities. This group can work through a facilitated, day-long meeting to finalize a collective impact plan that delivers the overarching goal(s) identified. One may believe that kindergarten readiness is the goal, but identifying the "who, what, how, when and where," in a coalition effort that must be outlined in order to think beyond the formal educational setting. Stakeholders need to be part of developing the action plan and job



descriptions to help build family, friends and neighbor capacity – what will each group or stakeholder need to do to deliver on the overarching goal?

The third recommendation centers on expanding the coalition, which means bringing in stakeholders from groups outside of the Chicano and Latino community, such as Somali or Hmong community representatives. This also could include representatives of childcare settings who have not yet achieved a 3 or 4 star Parent Aware rating, and looking at ways to make the process of certification more accessible to more providers. This activity would be intended to share the rationale and framework set up by initial stakeholders and learn how it could or would apply to other groups – and modify activities as needed to bring these additional stakeholders into collective action. How do the messages need to be modified, what other community forums could be activated?

The fourth recommendation to evaluate the message can be done by surveying the community. We recommend interviewing a random sample of members of the Chicano and Latino community across a broad age range that would include the intended audience of friends, family and neighbors. We also recommend assessing how professionals engaged in the work of early learning receive the messaging. Any feedback that may strengthen the messaging can be incorporated into a full community engagement plan. Additionally, this is a stage where the stakeholder participants can review whether they have clear direction on their role within the engagement activities. If not, role clarity will be important to address.

The fifth recommendation is a result of the findings regarding barriers to engagement. During research for this project, we found that one of the biggest barriers to engagement with the CLAC initiative for current stakeholders was a lack of understanding of the overarching goals and lack of clarity around what they as individual or group stakeholders would contribute to the effort. With more planning sessions completed in Phase I outlining the collective missions, message and members, this second phase can spend time dividing up the work into appropriate categories and areas of action. If you

consider the amount of time that the Northside Achievement Zone has been working together (essentially 11 years since it was founded as the Peace Foundation), it is clear that building coalitions takes time and concentrated effort. A coalition plan can't simply be introduced and accepted without building relationships overtime and recognizing the collective potential.

The sixth recommendation includes seeking funding and support for the developed collective impact plan. Funding will be more likely if it proves to enhance and augment the existing work of key stakeholders. A subcommittee could focus on grant writing geared toward expanding community engagement in early learning activities within struggling communities. One potential funding source to consider is the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Early Childhood Initiative Communities program.<sup>70</sup>

The seventh recommendation to create ongoing metrics is reflected in the suggested evaluation criteria below. You can't improve what you can't measure. We've outlined a number of metrics below that we feel would be good markers of progress for the collective impact work of improving the capacity of the family, friends and neighbors network within the Chicano and Latino community, and which could be a model for other communities of color as well.

## Suggestions for Evaluation Criteria

Evaluating the outcomes of any initiative is extremely important to ensuring its continued success. For this reason, we compiled a variety of benchmarks and valuations that can be used to assess progress and modify the path forward as needed. These criteria are as follows:

- Evaluate the number of Latino parents who “heard about the standards and resources”
- Track how many more ESL child care providers get rated through Parent Aware

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<sup>70</sup> Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, *Early Childhood Initiative Communities*, (2014), Retrieved from [http://smifoundation.org/ec\\_development/ec\\_grants/eci\\_communities.html](http://smifoundation.org/ec_development/ec_grants/eci_communities.html)



- Track how many new child care providers were helped to get licensed to provide programming/connected with grants
- Quantify how much funding the coalition was able to secure to implement the collective impact plan
- Assess press and media coverage in Rochester such as the number of articles, editorials
- Survey coalition participants at determined intervals throughout the process

## Conclusion

Helping build the capacity of families, especially those in the Chicano and Latino community, to prepare their children for kindergarten, is an extremely important consideration and a current gap that is not well addressed by traditional, institutional programs. Our research found that even with more scholarship funding, there were not enough highly rated childcare programs to take in children in need. With only nine percent of children being served by early learning scholarships, the accessibility of high quality early learning programs has significant barriers.

We feel that to make progress on improving kindergarten readiness, there must be significant effort put toward a community engagement effort, lead by a coalition of early learning advocates who can reach deep into the neediest communities to help them build the capacity to prepare their children for school and success. Our recommendations are a building block for the Chicano and Latino Affairs Council to help develop the necessary relationships for an active and engaged coalition in the Rochester Community.



## Indicators and Scoring

### Accelerated Pathways to Rating

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Parent Aware Indicators and Scoring sheet

**Accelerated Pathways to Rating** is a streamlined process to earn a Four Star Parent Aware Rating. This option is available because the requirements of child care accreditation, Head Start, public school pre-kindergarten programs, Early Childhood Special Education, or charter school early learning programs officially recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education mirror or exceed the requirements of the Parent Aware Full Rating process.

#### Eligible programs:

- Licensed child care centers with an approved accreditation (see list of approved accreditations below)
- Licensed family child care programs with an approved accreditation (see list of approved accreditations below)
- License-exempt public school pre-kindergarten programs meeting School Readiness standards
- License-exempt charter school early learning programs officially recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education □ License-exempt Early Childhood Special Education programs
- Licensed and license-exempt Early Head Start and Head Start programs meeting Head Start performance standards

#### Indicators and scoring details:

**Prerequisite:** Be licensed and have no current negative actions. Negative actions include maltreatment determinations, conditional license, suspensions, temporary immediate suspensions and revocations.



Fines will not disqualify your program from participating. This prerequisite does not apply to license-exempt programs.

**Required Indicators to earn a Four-Star Rating**

**Teaching and relationships**

Uses a curriculum that is aligned with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs)

**AND**

All lead child care providers/lead teachers have completed at least 8 hours of training, coaching, consultation or mentoring on implementing curriculum

**Assessment of child progress**

Uses approved assessment tool(s) at least *twice per year*

**AND**

Completes all domains in approved assessment tool(s) used by program

**AND**

Page 1

Indicators and Scoring for APR

Form#: BP-03

Updated  
04/22/14

Uses approved assessment tool(s) with all children in all age groups

**AND**

All lead child care providers/lead teachers have completed at least 8 hours of training, coaching, consultation or mentoring on authentic child assessment

**Approved Accreditations for Child Care Centers**



Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) American Montessori Society (AMS) School Accreditation Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) Accreditation Association of Montessori International (AMI) – Montessori School Recognition Council on Accreditation (COA) – Early Childhood Education Program Accreditation National Accreditation Commission (NAC) for Early Care and Education Programs Accreditation National Association for the Education for Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) Accreditation
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<b>Approved Accreditation for Family Child Care Providers</b>
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National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
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Definition of “lead teacher:”

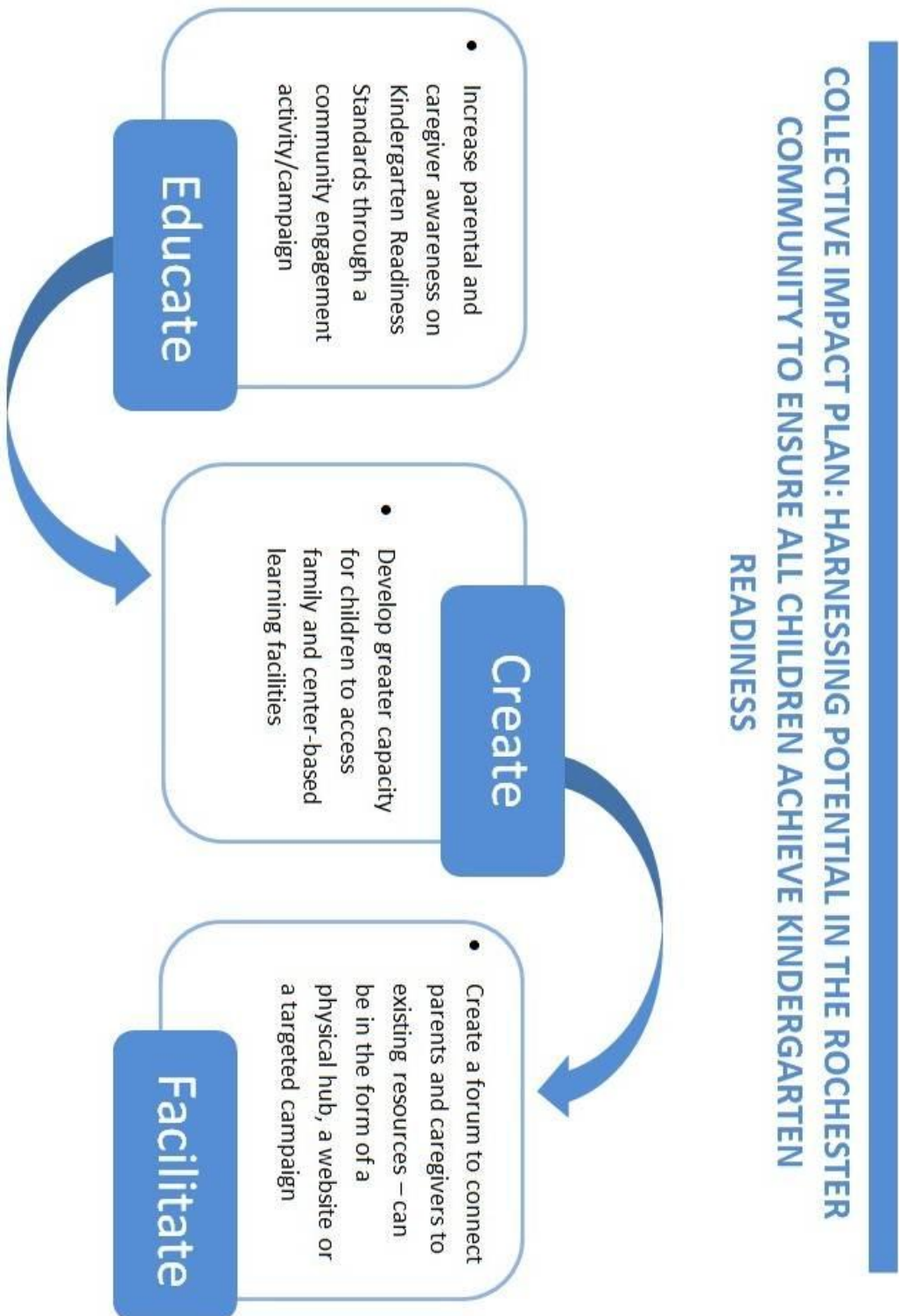
The lead teacher is the highest qualified teacher who works in a classroom during at least 50% of the program’s operating hours.

Definition of “lead child care provider:”

The lead child care provider is the highest qualified provider who works with children at least 50% of the program’s operating hours.

Indicators and Scoring for APR Form#: BP-03 Updated 04/22/14

## Appendix B: Collective Impact Plan





### **Collective Impact Plan Talking Points**

**Educate:** The Minnesota Department of Education is creating a uniform list of Kindergarten Readiness standards to be released in the fall of 2014. Additionally, the website Parents Know ([www.parentsknow.state.mn.us](http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us)) presents detailed information on physical, emotional and educational milestones that children should be reaching at intervals from birth to five years old. The information is currently available in English, Spanish, Hmong and Somali in both written and audio format. Parents and caregivers need to be connected to this information and conferred with on a regular basis to ensure their children are meeting these milestones.

**Create:** The current amount of funding provided for early learning scholarships is only sufficient to reach 9% of the children in Minnesota the need access. Lack of scholarships isn't the only barrier though, there are not enough quality facilities available either. Parent Aware refers families to 3-and-4 star rated facilities, but there are many family and center-based facilities in the Rochester area that need help reaching these standards. Also, according to data collected by the Children's Defense Fund, 13% of the family-based centers in Olmsted County use a language other than English. Increasing the amount and quality of centers that cater to Spanish-speaking families will ensure more Latino children are accessing the resources they need.

**Facilitate:** Finally, a forum needs to be created to connect families with the resources they need to reach these Kindergarten Readiness standards. Parent Aware is a great site, but may not be highly utilized by the Latino population in Rochester at this time (date not available on the demographics that utilize the site). Creating a physical or virtual space for parents to come to will facilitate this process. Not only will this space initiate the connection, but it should be used to continuously follow-up throughout the process of meeting early childhood milestones. Currently, children only receive standardized medical check-ups at 18 months, 1 year, 2 year and 3 years old. Staggering these check-ups with developmental screenings will ensure that children are keeping up before they reach kindergarten, rather than being identified as behind when they reach school age.

## Appendix C: Existing Resources

### Data Collection Resources:

**Children's Defense Fund:** ([www.cdf-mn.org](http://www.cdf-mn.org)): The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is a non-profit child advocacy organization that has worked since 1986 in Minnesota to ensure a level playing field for all children. Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota (CDF-MN) is the only policy organization in the state to focus solely on the needs of children. Their mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CFD has a “Bridge to Benefits” program that connects families to public works support programs and tax credits. They also have a KIDS COUNT Data Book that examines what happens when children live in families that struggle to meet basic needs. The Data Book has a section on each of the basic needs budget items: Food, Housing, Health Care, Child Care, Transportation and Other Necessities. Each section provides research on what happens to children when they aren't able to meet each basic need and the compounding effects that economic instability has on a child's physical, emotional, social and academic outcomes. Through their website, you can generate a customized report by county on the demographics of the children in your area and how they are performing.

CDF also hosts “Kids Count Coffee” sessions throughout the state where attendees learn about statewide trends in children's health, education, and economic security. They host discussions on how economic stability and the affordability of basic needs affects child outcomes, and policies that could improve child outcomes to ensure that the state has a healthy, educated, and stable future workforce.

**Minnesota Compass:** <http://www.mncompass.org/early-childhood/overview>

The tagline for MN Compass is “Measuring Progress. Inspiring Action.” They track and analyze trends in areas that affect Minnesota's quality of life, giving policymakers, business and community leaders, and concerned individuals a common foundation to act on issues to improve our communities. Their research on early childhood shows that in Rochester, [87.1 percent of children under 5 get early learning screens](#). They also have [statistics on the achievement gap](#) and disparities statewide as well as a few data elements in the Southeastern Minnesota region.

### Human Capital Research Collaborative:

[http://www.humancapitalrc.org/research/mn\\_school\\_readiness\\_indicators.pdf](http://www.humancapitalrc.org/research/mn_school_readiness_indicators.pdf)

This 2011 report spurred action on standardization of data on school readiness.

### Online Resources:

**Parents Know** ([www.ParentsKnow.state.mn.us](http://www.ParentsKnow.state.mn.us)): This website provides parenting information, resources and activities to help children grow, develop and learn from birth through high school. There are specific developmental milestones from birth to 5 years available in both audio and written form in four languages (including Spanish) on the website. They also have a hotline where parents can be connected to a professional if they're concerned about their child's developmental process. Parents Know is also linked to:

**Help Me Grow:**

<http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/index.htm?gclid=CPuxxaCw8MECFXEQ7AodxT8A1w>

Some young children need extra help to learn and grow. Help Me Grow provides resources for families to look at developmental milestones, to learn if there are concerns, and to take the lead in seeking additional support or in referring their child for a comprehensive, confidential screening or evaluation at no cost. (Minnesota children from birth to five-years-old, if found eligible, can receive services in their home, child care setting or school. These services are free regardless of income or immigrant status.) Help Me Grow is an interagency initiative of the State of Minnesota (Department of Education, Department of Health and Department of Human Services) partnering with all local service agencies.

**Parent Aware:** <http://parentawareratings.org/about>

A search engine for quality child care and early education programs in Minnesota. Parent Aware's Star Ratings help parents find programs that go above and beyond to prepare children for school and life. Our one- to four-star ratings system – a free service – measures best practices identified by research that help children succeed. They also do legislative advocacy. They gave Minnesota a “D” in encouraging home assessments:

[http://www.minnpost.com/sites/default/files/attachments/PASR\\_Report\\_Card\\_08082013.pdf](http://www.minnpost.com/sites/default/files/attachments/PASR_Report_Card_08082013.pdf) -

“Through employers, encourage parents to focus at home on their child’s school readiness, including use of the PASR-supported [www.IsYourChildReady.com](http://www.IsYourChildReady.com).”

**Rochester Community Education:**

[http://www.rochesterce.org/early\\_childhood/kick\\_off\\_to\\_kindergarten/information\\_on\\_preparing\\_for\\_kinder\\_garten\\_from\\_p\\_a/](http://www.rochesterce.org/early_childhood/kick_off_to_kindergarten/information_on_preparing_for_kinder_garten_from_p_a/)

Preparing for kindergarten versions for 4 year olds in English, Spanish, Somali and Arabic, and for 5 year olds in English, Spanish and Arabic.

**Minnesota Department of Education:** <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/ELSSearch/search.do>

Search for early childhood programs by county and contact information.

**In-Person Resources:**

**Juntos Group in Rochester:** <http://www.achla.info/#>

The Juntos Club offers educational programming for children and adults through ACHLA, the Association of Chicano, Hispanic, and Latino Americans in Rochester

**Child Care Resource and Referral** (<http://www.c2r2.org/>):

A non-profit organization that is a resource for parents, child care providers and community members for all aspects of early childhood. They administer the Head Start programming in the Rochester and Olmsted County area and contract Olmsted County and the Rochester Public Schools to provide Early Head Start and early learning programs for families with children ages 3 & 4 years old who are income eligible based on the federal poverty guidelines. Some of the services available include:

- Preschool Scholarships
- Early childhood learning experiences
- Parent education and support
- Health and community service referrals



- Family events & Partners In Education (PIE) Groups
- Kindergarten information

**Early Childhood Special Education:** <http://www.rochester.k12.mi.us/pages/5602/ecse-early-childhood-special-education-3-5>

The ECSE program is a basic special education program that provides a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for children whose special needs and/or impairments require more intense interventions and supports than a regular preschool classroom can provide.

**Early Childhood Family Education** (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/ECFE/>): One of the best-known programs is the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program. ECFE is available to all children ages 0-5 and their parents. The program's goals are to "strengthen families and to help children develop to their full potential". Classes and activities vary and are offered during the daytime, as well as evenings. The programs are financed with combined local and state funding, which may be supplemented with registration fees and funds from other sources.

In Rochester, programs are run by the Rochester Public Schools Community Education Program "[Parents Are Important in Rochester](#)" (PAIR). PAIR provides:

- Parenting information and resources to help develop positive informed attitudes and expectations about raising children.
- Early childhood education using purposeful, age appropriate, research based instruction covering all areas of development.
- Fun learning activities for both parents and children.

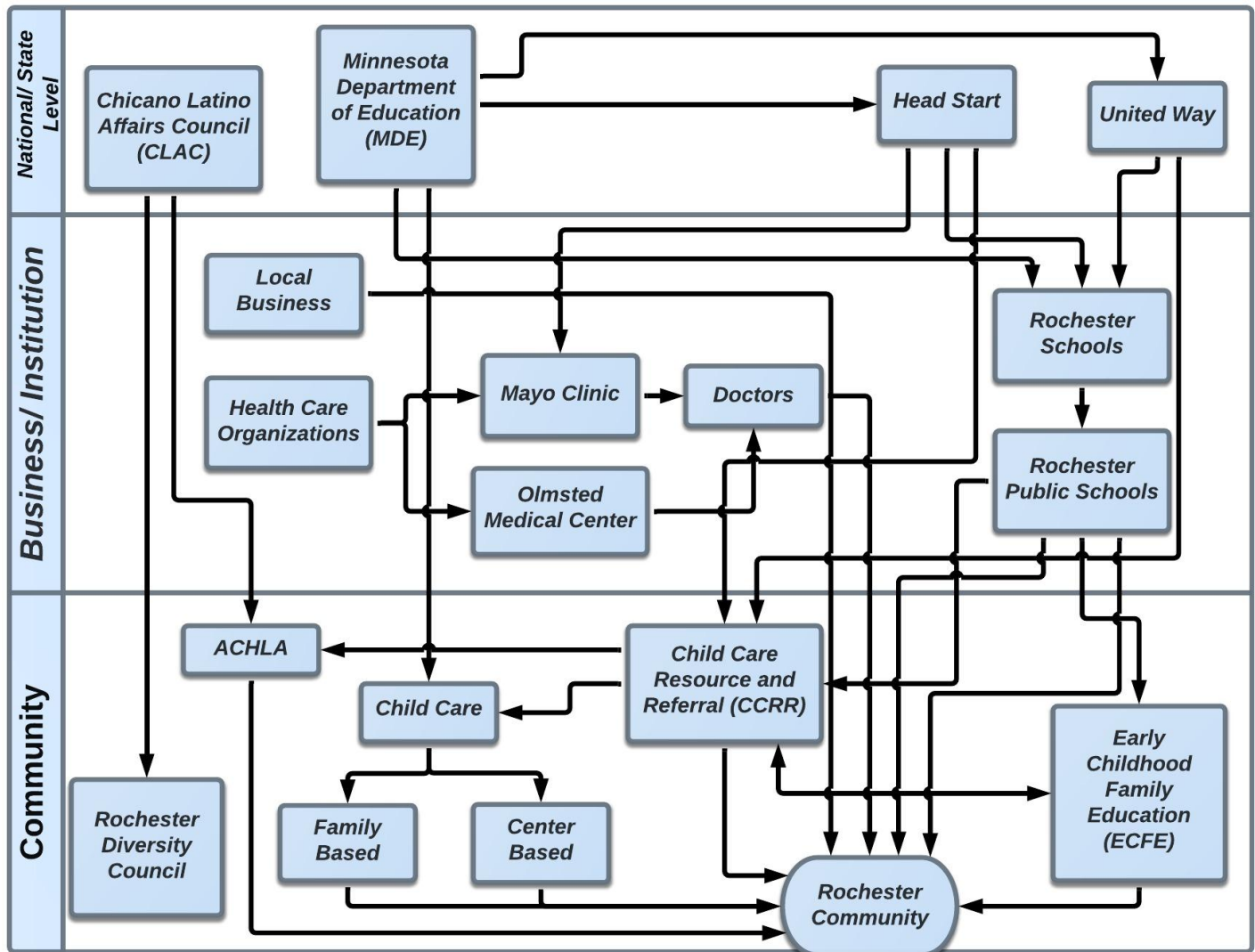
PAIR classes are taught by MN State licensed parent and early childhood educators who work directly with parents and their young children. PAIR is intended for ALL parents, relatives or individuals who function in a primary parenting role and their children, age birth to kindergarten enrollment, who live in the Rochester School District.

### **Funding Resources:**

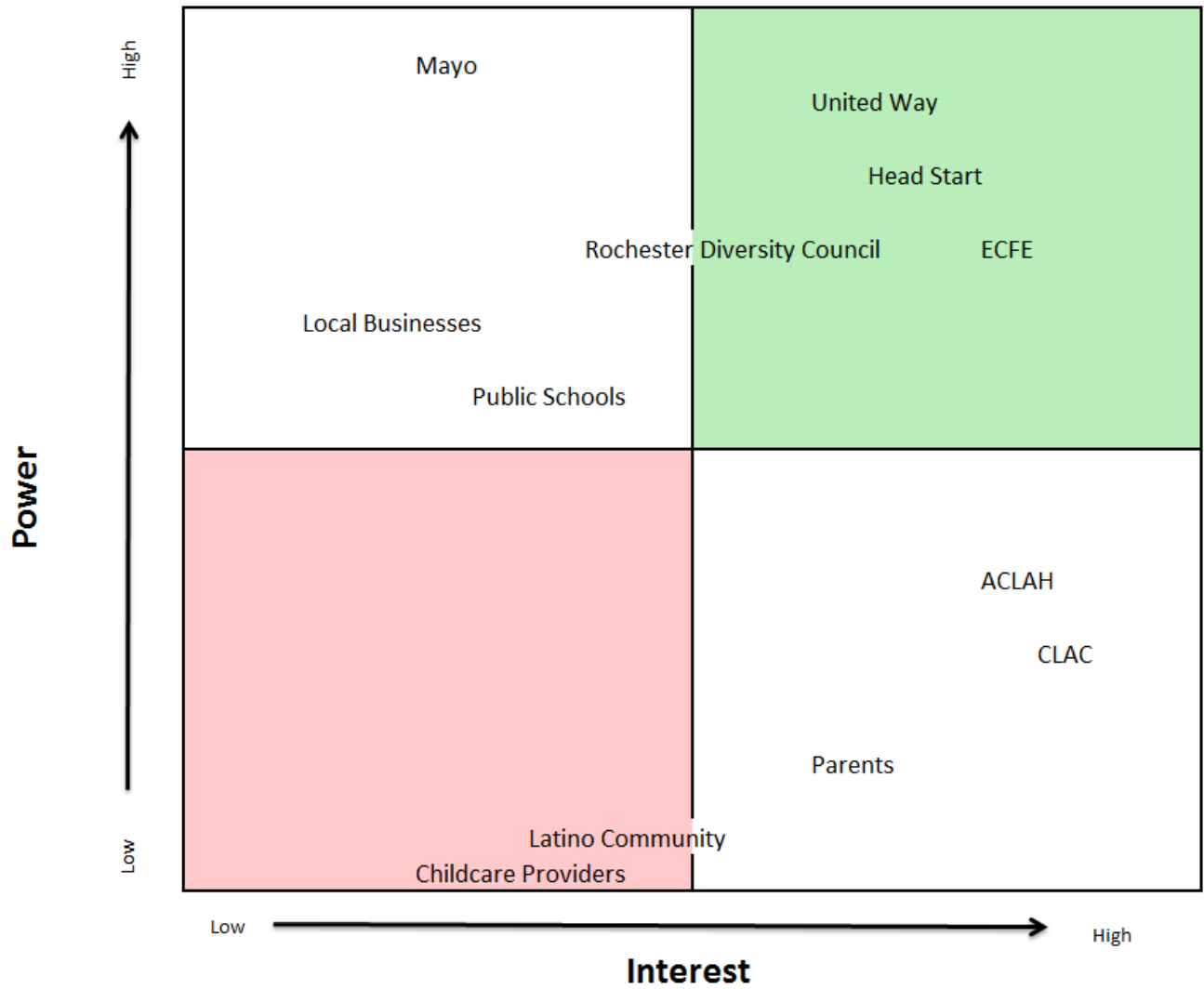
**Minneminds** (<http://www.minneminds.com/index.html>): MinneMinds is a statewide campaign to increase public funding for access to high quality early care and education programs proven to prepare our children for success in school and in life. They currently administer the scholarships that were made available through the funding provided by the state of Minnesota in the 2014 legislative session.

**Olmsted County United Way** (<http://www.uwolmsted.org/about-us-0>): United Way is a worldwide organization that has 1,800 community based locations in 41 countries. The organization United Way of Olmsted County unites people and resources to improve lives in the community with a focus on education, income, health, and basic needs. United Way helps families in need through voluntary donations and federal funding.

## Appendix D: Stakeholder Analysis



## Appendix E: Power vs Interest Stakeholder Grid



## Appendix F: Fact Sheet



### On Education

Across the board, Hispanics are one of the poorest performing ethnic groups in Minnesota. According to the MN Department of Education the graduation rate for Hispanics was 53.4% compared to the state average of 82.7%. Studies have shown that the achievement gap starts before a child reaches kindergarten. This is the problem.

### The Facts

- 1300+ children enter kindergarten each year in Rochester, Minn.
- There are 355 Preschool Providers in Rochester, but only 40 are Parent Aware rated programs.

	Number in Rochester	Parent Aware Rated
Preschool Programs	10	3
Centers	27	15
Family Providers	318	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>40</b>

- Approximately 240 children in Rochester are on the waitlist for Head Start
- In Head Start, 63% of the Hispanic students speak Spanish and about 27% of total enrollment is Hispanic
- Only 13% of family-based childcare providers speak a language other than English
- In 2012 the average annual cost for licensed family-based childcare cost of \$7322 - \$8017

### Barriers

Access: There is a shortage of Parent Aware rated programs for children in Rochester.

Cost of programming: The high cost of childcare is keeping families from participating. The Hispanic and Latino community tends to keep their children at home with a parent or family member instead of enrolling in these expensive programs.

Culture: The Hispanic and Latino community does not place education as highly as other cultures. Work and family come first resulting in the lowest graduation rates next to American Indians. Also parents do not always know their child is not prepared until they enter kindergarten.



### Recommendations

Educate: Let families know that they have to actively prepare their children for kindergarten. Make sure the readiness standards are available and promote them within the community.

Create: Develop the capacity for centers and family based learning facilities to take on the children that need services.

Facilitate: Create the connection between parents and direct service providers. This can either be through online resources or a physical hub.



## Appendix G: Interview Summaries

### *Rochester Public Schools (Michael Munoz and Jayne Gibson)*

October 26, 2014

- Biggest barriers to achievement in the Rochester Schools include lack of access to high quality early care and education for low-income families and language barriers for immigrant families.
- Some schools have high concentrations of poverty
- Rochester is well positioned through its proven history of collaboration across early learning providers to expand opportunities in this area. (The Hawthorne School has an
- Kindergarten readiness assessment has been unsteady (varied and inconsistent) – they tried a new tool last year which showed only 46 percent of children assessed were highly proficient with letter sounds, only 63 percent on number recognition and 58 percent on shape recognition. This information was not broken down by ethnicity or race.
- They feel it is important to work collaboratively and match programs to students and schools as well as having a “backbone” organization and data sharing capacity to link providers. (CCRR got a grant last year to do the data sharing activity.)
- They had 1300+ students enter kindergarten in the 2014/2015 school year.
- The School Readiness program offered through the Rochester Public Schools matches a wide variety of services with the needs of participating children. Children identified with the greatest needs receive the most intensive and extensive services. (no stats on number served or the ethnic/racial breakdown of participants – will request).

### *Diversity Council, Rochester MN (Kay Hocker)*

October 27, 2014

- Reiterated that Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the community but that many groups are not succeeding.
- There are a lot of early learning efforts underway in the community but there is no strategy below kindergarten at a community level that could address pre-kindergarten problem. She feels that educational opportunities for families could help.
- Hocker says an important barrier to collaborative or networked behavior to consider is the intense competition for resources, especially from granting agencies. And, she says that granting agencies are not a sustainable strategy for long-term agendas.
- She suggested that the ACHLA organization could use some focus because they are often asked to be everything to everybody.
- The Diversity Council can provide community and adult programming around cultural awareness – they have certified staff to provide the Intercultural Development Inventory to individuals.

### *Child Care Resource & Referral (Sandy Simar)*

November 11, 2014

Childcare Resource and Referral is a nonprofit organization primarily whose mission is to “ensure positive beginnings for all young children and their families.” CCR&R is a resource for parents, child care providers and community members for all aspects of early childhood.





- There are 3 preschools, 15 centers and 22 family providers who are highly rated through the Parent Aware rating system (making them eligible to provide care to children with early learning scholarship money).
- Of the licensed providers in Rochester, there are 7 preschools, 12 centers and 296 family providers who are not highly rated
- They show 240 children on the waiting list for Head Start, 63 on waiting list for the Early Head Start and 39 on waiting list for School Readiness program.
- During the school year, anywhere from 25 to 30 percent of Head Start participants enrolled are Hispanic.
- In the last six months, they've received referrals for almost 500 children in Rochester between ages birth to 8 years old. The concentration of referrals are in the under one-year-old range and again in the three to four-year olds. Ostensibly this may be because of the opportunity for Early Learning Scholarships at this age range.
- They built a new facility that has 10 classrooms with a significant donation from Mayo Clinic (approximately 8 percent of the \$8M cost).
- In the Early Head Start program, there are 7 home visits over the year. They help parents develop goals and provide parent socialization opportunities. This is not the same as the ECFE program which are not means tested, but are universal access.
- Some of the existing collaborative community activities that CCRR participate in include Olmsted County Public Health Maternal and Child Health, Boys & Girls Club, Crisis Nursery and RCTC.
- CCRR leads a 0 to 6 Early Learning Group in Olmsted County composed of the RPS School Readiness staff, Byron School Readiness, Civic League Day Center, Good News Children Center, CCRR Head Start and the Tri-Valley Migrant Head Start.
- Head Start demographics for 2014/2015 includes 108 Hispanic children out of a total of 407 kids. 68 of the 407 speak Spanish.

### *Early Childhood Family Education (Peggy O'Toole)*

November 14, 2014

- The Early Childhood Family Education program within the Community Education Division of the Rochester Public Schools is partner to many projects that address early learning.
- O'Toole feel that there are three components that need focus within the realm of early learning: quality, access and leadership. She also mentioned the need for clear data.
- There are a lot of early learning stakeholders in Rochester (would be important to map this out further). O'Toole feels they work very collaboratively together.
- ECFE offers universal access to family educational programming, but there are fees attached. The Public Schools offer School Readiness programming as well as the Family Literacy Program at Hawthorn that not only provides adults with literacy support (including getting GED), but they also offer early learning programs for the children of these families for kids under 5.
- Rochester was invited to apply to the MDE "Pre-K through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Alignment Project," and they were accepted. They just recently had their last training from MDE. The goal is to take the alignment project into the community as a collaborative team of organizations including ECFE, CCRR, RPS and private preschools. This may be an area where CLAC/ACHLA could help.
- The gap (value add) that Peggy sees is the "family, friends and other" group – when families, friends and others provide that care to children in the pre-kindergarten years in non-traditional/non-sanctioned arrangements (grandparents, aunts, neighbors).

*MN Department of Education (Melvin Carter III)*

November 6, 2014

- Melvin relates to the resistance encountered when trying to push for additional resources for an individual ethnic group or community. He has tailored his initiatives in the past to a motto of “we are working to ensure all children live up to their full potential”. He doesn’t care for the phrase “achievement gap” because most people associate it with the African-American or Latino populations. They argue that low-income white children are similarly disadvantaged but left out of the conversation when it focuses solely on the “achievement gap”. It ultimately leads to a fight over who is “worse off” – if we focus on all children, then the data will speak for itself (i.e.: those that truly are the worst off will likely end up coming from the minority populations).
- Melvin recommends that an attempt to bring in something new could be potentially alienating for CLAC/ACHLA – what he referred to as the “flavor of the month” initiative. These are often not viewed favorably by educators and existing service providers. He recommends that whatever initiative is proposed taps into existing resources. It’s not the individual players that are failing our kids, but the system in general, he says. Whatever is proposed needs to be seen as adding value rather than competing for scarce resources, which is likely to alienate stakeholders.
- Finding uniform data on the success of early childhood education initiatives is difficult because there are so many diverse groups serving that population. Early learning isn’t always located in traditional delivery systems such as public/private schools or Headstart. It can be in the basements and living rooms of daycare centers, caregivers, etc. It’s equally important to ensure caregivers, as well as families, are adequately prepared to help children reach Kindergarten Readiness standards.
- That data that is collected by MDE on Kindergarten Readiness only focuses on a sample of 10% of the kindergarten populations. This is misleading due to the small sample size, but also because it’s an “opt-in” survey. Melvin noted that many school that know they will fail the survey standards are not likely to opt-in.
- He recommended a great data-collection agency called the Children’s Defense Fund. Their 2014 data isn’t on the website yet, but he gave me the email address of someone who would be willing to share it with us early. He said it breaks down minority populations by county and what percentage of each minority population falls into the low-income group. I
- Melvin would like to know when we schedule our presentation for CLAC and expressed interested in attending it.

*ACHLA (Miriam Goodson)*

October 30, 2014

**Please describe your involvement in ACHLA:** I was one of the original founders of ACHLA in Rochester. Now I serve as a secretary but am very involved with the Latino community.

**What is missing for kids coming into kindergarten unprepared to learn?** There seems to be programs available and funding available to Latino students for early education but access is a problem



and screening is a problem. There are both cultural and resource problems here. On the resource side, the last I heard there are some 300 kids on a waitlist for Head Start. Only the neediest children are eligible for the program. Many times doctors are labeling children as developmentally delayed because they are so far behind, and then they become more eligible for some of these programs. It takes more than just being poor to have access many times. There are many families that know their child is not ready but do not have access to the resources... there just are not enough. From the cultural standpoint there are many factors. One big one is families value family and work very highly. So individual education is not as important. Parents often have varying work schedules and members of the family are watching their kids when parents are at work or members of the community. It is not very common to have their children enrolled in a childcare program. Television is raising these children or they are playing with other Latino children. Parents cannot drop their kids off or pick them up at certain times. So set childcare often times does not fit into their lives. As a result they think their child is learning and growing and have no clue how far behind they are falling. Doctors will sometimes recognize this at visits when the child is not meeting their milestones for their age and recommend a program. So parents do not know to seek out these programs and they do not think it is as important. There are many programs out there but the parents have to know to seek them out.

**Side note:** Head Start facts from the website. Head Start is only able to serve 23% of the children that qualify due to funding limitations. 49% of this population is racially diverse, 31% speak another primary language, 13% are diagnosed with a disability and 9% are homeless.

[http://www.mnheadstart.org/PDF/HS13%202013%20FACT%20SHEET\\_4.pdf](http://www.mnheadstart.org/PDF/HS13%202013%20FACT%20SHEET_4.pdf)

**What is the most pressing barrier for them?** The disconnect. Parents do not know their children are behind until they get into the system. As a result, they sometimes get labeled as “delayed” and have a really hard time catching up. Also, many children struggle so much they act out and then behavior becomes just another barrier to their education.

**In your experience does Parent Aware provide what parents need to find highly ranked early learning opportunities?** The ranking is great, and easy to understand, the problem is there are too many children and not enough of them. I have never seen any member of the Latino community get into a five star ranked program. So kids are qualifying for grants to parent aware ranked programs, but there are not enough spaces so these families fall through the cracks.

**What community organizations support your work?** Head Start and Child Care Resource and Referral are the two big ones. The piece that is missing is the follow through.

**What stage do you feel needs the most work in this achievement gap?** As early as possible. Make sure the parents know what to prepare for and can have access to these programs so their children are not always trying to catch up.

**Miriam’s goal/life work:** To be seen as a community and has a lot to give and not just needy!!

TAKEAWAY from interview:

- Parents do not know their child is behind until it is too late



- Latino population often does not go into childcare so parents need to know what “school readiness” means to prepare at home
- There are not enough programs to support the need for early education.
- Children that are not ready for kindergarten get put into “special education” or are always trying to catch up.

Additional interview conducted with Miriam Goodson

11/5/14 @2:30pm

Phone Interview

What kinds of activities are included in their Latino Fest that speak directly to kindergarten readiness? We host tables with information on Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and the screenings necessary to have access to scholarship money. No activities per se.

JUNTOS Program: How might this work be focused to support kindergarten readiness?

Miriam hosts the Juntos program every Sunday from 10-12 September to June. This is where they help with math and English skills for school age children and also adults. She encourages families to come and bring their young children. There are early childhood teachers that help with the young children. Miriam uses this time to educate parents on how they should be preparing their child for school. It is not super organized, more of a place for families to come and engage with the community.

Additional conversation:

Barrier for this population:

- Another barrier is that parents are very protective of their family. So in a way, the parents are a barrier to their children. There is a trust issue with those that are not a part of the community. Miriam tries to empower parents and teach parents before their children become teenagers. It is frustrating for the students to always be behind.
- Cultural identity is also a barrier. It’s like the kids have to decide if they want to be a part of the community because if they are too mainstream than they are rejecting their Latino side. Many things that would be considered mainstream are things that would help them go to college though.

TAKEAWAY from interview:

- Parents are barriers to their child being ready for school.
- Need to educate parents!